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## THE MODERATING EFFECT OF HOST COUNTRY CO-WORKERS' CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR ON EXPATRIATE ADJUSTMENT AND CONTEXTUAL PERFORMANCE OF EXPATRIATES IN MALAYSIA

Noor Hafiza Zakariya<sup>a</sup>, Abdul Kadir Othman<sup>b</sup>, Zaini Abdullah<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>School of Business Management, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia

Email: [noorhafiza@uum.edu.my](mailto:noorhafiza@uum.edu.my)

<sup>b</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia,

Email: [abdkadir@salam.uitm.edu.my](mailto:abdkadir@salam.uitm.edu.my)

<sup>c</sup>Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia,

Email: [zabadu@salam.uitm.edu.my](mailto:zabadu@salam.uitm.edu.my)

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### Abstract

Despite today's international business environment challenges, international assignments remain a crucial aspect as a global strategy of multinational corporations (MNCs). MNCs tend to expand their international business to host countries by implementing expatriation practices. As the expatriation emerges, the issue of expatriates' job performance remains as a central concern among human resource professional, scholars and practitioners as well as multinational organizations. The review of literature indicates that expatriate adjustment always correlates with expatriates' job performance. Expatriates will succeed in their job, due to the higher level of adjustment in the host country. Several factors may influence this relationship and some studies have focused on the host country national role. But, most expatriate-related research has neglected other expatriate stakeholders such as HCNs. Therefore, role of host country nationals (HCNs) should not be simply ignored by researchers due to its importance. Therefore, this study examines the role of host country co-workers citizenship behavior as a moderator on the relationship between expatriate adjustment and contextual performance. Based on sample of 139 expatriates residing and working in Malaysia, the host country co-workers citizenship behavior was found to be a significant moderator between interaction adjustment and contextual performance. The findings suggest that success of expatriates' contextual performance does not entirely rest on expatriates' ability but also the assistance and courteous behavior that they receive during their assignment from host country co-workers. The findings of this study would expand the body of knowledge in expatriate research area especially in international human resource management and cross-cultural management. Furthermore, this study is relevant to human resource professionals, multinational organizations and expatriating firms in making rational decisions when handling international assignment to ensure the success of international assignments among their expatriates.

**Keywords:** Interaction Adjustment, Contextual Performance, Host Country Co-Workers Citizenship Behaviour, Multinational Corporations (MNCs).

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### INTRODUCTION

Multinational corporations (MNCs) tend to expand their international business and operations in host countries by implementing expatriation practices by hiring and sending their expatriates to host countries. Expatriates have been defined as who are working overseas, based on certain time to complete certain tasks (Abdullah & Jin; 2011). The numbers of MNCs from emerging countries has dramatically grown recently. Wilkinson, Wood and Demirbag (2014) stated that, there is only 19 firms from emerging and developing economies featured in the Fortune Global 500 list in 1990 but this number increased to 123 in 2011. Feitosa, Kreutzer and Krampferth (2014) also mentioned that, there are almost 900,000 transnational companies around the world in order to accumulate the international markets in today's business global environment. This situation leads to the increase demand of expatriates since the last two

decades (Bhatti, Battour, Ismail & Sundram, 2014). Aycan (1997) mentioned that an expatriate is a catalyst for the continuity of MNCs organizational structure and philosophy in the host country, which is vital for ensuring the organization could remain competitive in the industry and remain success in the host country. Therefore, expatriate's job performance is highly related to success of MNCs. Expatriates are expected to perform and achieve organizational goals by performing certain required behaviours. Several predictors and factors may affect expatriates' job performance in the host country. The most influential factor is cross-cultural adjustment faced by expatriates while residing in the host country. Once they could adjust and adapt to the host country's cultures, norms and values, it would facilitate and enhance their job performance in the host country. To date, most studies do not examine the role of host country co-workers citizenship behavior as a moderating variable, which might affect expatriate adjustment and performance. As supported by Malek, Budhwar and Reiche (2015), most of the expatriate-related research has neglected other expatriate stakeholders such as HCNs in their studies. Thus, this study focuses on the moderation effect of host country co-workers citizenship behavior to the relationship between expatriate adjustment and job performance (contextual performance).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Expatriates' Job Performance (Contextual Performance)**

*Job performance* is defined by Campbell, McCloy and Oppler (1993) as the behaviours that are expected in the line with the organizational goals and mainly under the control of individual employees. Job performance is conceptualized as a multi-faceted construct (Campbell, 1990), which consists of task and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; 1997). According to Lee and Donohue (2012), task performance relates to formal aspects of a job and contributes to the technical core directly. Meanwhile, a contextual performance relates to activities that contribute to the organizational, social and psychological context of the workplace. Kraimer and Wayne (2004) and Shaffer, Harrison, Gregersen, Black and Ferzandi (2006) used Borman and Motowidlo's categorization of task and contextual performance in their study. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1993), task performance is the effectiveness of employees to perform activities that contribute to the organization's technical core either directly by implementing a part of its technological process, or indirectly by providing it with needed materials or services. For example, firefighter job, several dimension of task performance might include performing rescue operations, conducting salvage operations and applying ventilation procedures. Whereas, contextual performance contributes to organizational effectiveness in a way of shaping the organizational, social and psychological context that serves as the catalyst for task activities and processes (Shaffer et al., 2006). For example, employee volunteers to carry out task activities that are not formally part of the job, helping, and cooperating with others in the organization to get tasks accomplished (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Employees will engage in contextual performance when they are for instance involved with voluntarily helping colleagues, putting in extra effort to complete a given task, also putting in extra hours to get work done on time and so forth. The review of the literature found that employees who are less satisfied with their jobs may exhibit lower levels of contextual performance (Edward, Bell, Arthur, & Decuir, 2008). In expatriate study, Kraimer and Wayne (2004) put much attention on this aspect in measuring expatriates' job performance. The distinction between these two facets make this study rely on the contextual performance per se, which needs further investigation.

### **Expatriate Adjustment**

According to Shaffer et al., (2006), during the 1980s, the focus was mainly on expatriate adjustment whether the expatriate psychological (dis)comfort or (dis)stress experienced while on assignment (e.g., Black, 1988; Black, Mendenhall & Oddou, 1991). After that, in the 1990s, according to Shaffer et al., (2006), researchers gradually put their concern on withdrawal cognitions or the strength of plan/decisions by expatriates to prematurely quit their assignments. Expatriates intent to quit from their assignment and do not accomplish the task. In addition, there is a growing body of research on the cross-cultural adjustment of expatriates (e.g., Black & Stephens, 1989; Peltokorpi & Froese, 2012; Selmer et al., 2015). Previous findings suggest, there is a relationship between cross-cultural adjustment and foreign assignment success, whilst failure to adjust to the host culture is most often cited as the reason for early termination or quit from international assignment (e.g., Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991; Shaffer, Harrison, & Gilley, 1999).

Expatriate adjustment consists of three dimensions of adjustment (*work, interaction, general*) (Black, 1988). In addition, Black and Stephens (1989) defined expatriate's adjustment as a psychological

comfort with various aspects of the host environment, which consist of three dimensions (e.g., work adjustment, interaction adjustment and general adjustment). Those three dimensions are *general* – adjusting to housing food, and other aspects of the foreigner culture, *work* - meeting job responsibilities and performance expectations, and *interaction* – socializing and speaking with host-country nationals.

Hassan and Diallo (2013) examined the impact of cross-cultural adjustment on expatriate's job performance which has been conducted among 100 respondents from five private colleges in Malaysia. This study comprised of four factors such as cross-cultural training, organizational and family support, personality and emotional intelligence, as independent variables, cross-cultural adjustment as a mediator and expatriate's job performance as a dependent variable in their conceptual framework. The result of their study shows that personality and organizational and family support have significant and positive impact on improving expatriates' job performance. As overall, cross-cultural adjustment has significant and positive impact on expatriate's job performance. Andreason (2003) stated that ineffective expatriate performance and premature returns is primarily related to an inability to adjust to the foreign environment rather than a lack of technical competence. In order to explain expatriate adjustment, there is a comprehensive integrated model which focuses on several major sets of factors that influence this dimension such as Black, Mendenhall and Oddou (1991) and Shaffer, Harrison and Gilley (1999) which involves job factors, organizational factors, positional factors, non-work factors and individual factors (Andreason, 2003).

The review of the literature indicates that there are researches examining expatriate adjustment to the foreign work outcomes such as intention to return early, contextual performance, job performance, job satisfaction and intention to complete the assignment (e.g. Kawai & Strange, 2014). However, the findings are inconclusive. Therefore, this study is meant to provide a clear answer on the relationship between expatriate adjustment and contextual performance per se. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 1a: General adjustment is positively related to contextual performance.

Hypothesis 1b: Work adjustment is positively related to contextual performance.

Hypothesis 1c: Interactional adjustment is positively related to contextual performance.

### **Host Country Co-Workers' Behaviour**

The review of the literature indicates that expatriate adjustment in the host country could be influenced by several factors (Konanahalli, Oyedele, Meding, & Spillane, 2011). The host country national's role would be an influential factor toward adjustment and job performance of expatriates. It is important to examine certain factors that relate to expatriate job performance in the host country. As indicated by previous research, the host country co-workers' behaviour plays a critical role in facilitating expatriates adjustment and affecting expatriates' job performance. Ercan (2014) highlighted the role of the host country co-workers' interactions (e.g., helping and courteous citizenship behaviors), which is named in this study as a host country co-workers' citizenship behavior. Ercan (2014) used the term interaction and helping behaviour of co-workers by adopting organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) concept. Therefore, by adopting this concept to the current study, expatriates who have been helped and treated with courtesy by their host country coworkers, are expected to adjust well and perform successfully in their job. In other words, co-workers who always offer help and assistance to expatriates may affect expatriates' job performance.

Moreover, when host country co-workers perform citizenship behaviour toward expatriates (e.g., helping expatriates with their work related problems), expatriates may become more confident to contact and interact with host country co-workers when they need help with a work or non-work related problems. Significantly, this condition would enhance expatriates' job performance due to the interaction effects of the host country co-workers behaviors. However, the moderating effect of host country co-workers' citizenship behavior toward adjustment and expatriates' contextual performance is still unclear and lacking of empirical evidence. Thus, this study will fill the gap by hypothesizing that:

Hypothesis 2a: Host country co-workers' citizenship behavior positively moderates the relationship between general adjustment and contextual performance.

Hypothesis 2b: Host country co-workers' citizenship behavior positively moderates the relationship between work adjustment and contextual performance.

Hypothesis 2c: Host country co-workers' citizenship behavior positively moderates the relationship between interactional adjustment and contextual performance.

### **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

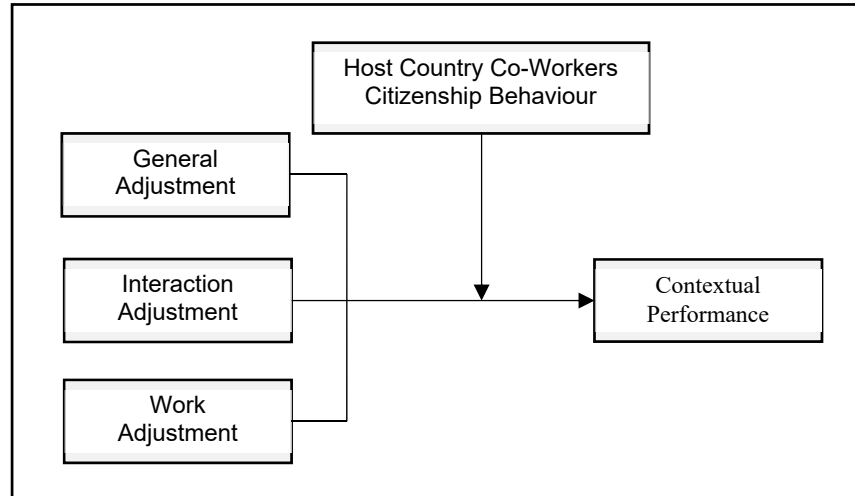


Figure 1: Proposed Framework of Moderation Effect of Host Country Co-Workers' Behavior on the Relationship between Expatriate Adjustment and Contextual Performance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sampling Design

The sample size of this study was 385, which was determined by using sampling frame of expatriate lists from several directories such as Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA), State Development Council, Invest KL and Invest Selangor, and various directories of International Business Chamber of Commerce in Malaysia. This study adopted a quantitative approach using stratified random sampling. Expatriates in Klang Valley and Selangor were chosen to be involved in this study. The study used self-administered and mailed questionnaires to respondents. The respondents in the study are currently working in multinational corporations in both states in Malaysia. Until September 2016, there were about 166,817 active expatriates in Malaysia from various countries such as Bangladesh, India, China, Philippines, Japan, Indonesia, United Kingdom, Pakistan, Republic of Korea, Singapore and others. This study used probability sampling technique which is stratified sampling, where 50 MNCs involved with 20 expatriates for each MNC in both states, resulted in 1000 sets of questionnaires distributed to the respondents by mail and self-administered approaches.

### Research Procedure

The researcher sent official cover letter to 50 MNCs requesting participation in the study and attached with the confirmation letter as a postgraduate student at UiTM Shah Alam, Selangor and currently conducting a PhD study. Then, the researcher requested human resource manager of each company to select randomly 20 expatriates within the company, regardless the numbers of expatriates in organization to be involved in the study. The researcher mentioned that participation and materials gathered from this study would be treated as private and confidential. In the cover letter, the researcher briefly stated the purposes of the research and explained the rationale of the study with emphasizing on the importance of their contribution to this study. A twenty set of questionnaires with self-address envelope were attached together in the envelope for each company and the respondents are expected to post a complete questionnaire as soon as possible when they complete answering it. After one week and every two weeks after the distribution of questionnaire, the researcher did follow-up by using telephone calls and emails stressing on the importance of respondent's response and purpose of the study. When the expected response rate was achieved within the time frame, then data collection processes were put into halt and the collected data were ready to be analyzed.

### Instrumentation

The 14 item measure of expatriate adjustment was adopted from Black and Stephens (1989). Respondents were asked to answer the items using a five-point Likert scale ranging from very unadjusted (1) to completely adjusted (5) to indicate their adjustment level in terms of general, interactional and work adjustments. The Cronbach's alpha for general adjustment was 0.87, work adjustment was 0.81 and interactional adjustment was 0.87, respectively (Black & Stephens, 1989).

Four items used to measure the dependent variable, contextual performance, were adopted from Kraimer and Wayne (2004). Respondents were asked to rate their perceived ability in contextual performance items using five-point Likert scale ranging from very poor (1) to outstanding (5). Sample items include "I can interact effectively with host country co-workers" and "I can adapt to foreign facility's business customs and norms". Cronbach's alpha for contextual performance was 0.831 (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004).

Six items used to measure the host country co-workers' citizenship behavior were adopted from Ercan (2014). The respondents were asked to rate their agreement with the statements of host country treatment and work-related behavior toward respondent on a five-point Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). Sample items included "my host country coworkers help me when I have heavy workloads" and "my host country co-workers take time to listen to my problems and worries". The internal consistency or Cronbach's alpha was 0.86 (Ercan, 2014).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Profile of Respondents**

The final sample size was 139 after considering the excessive data missing and extreme outliers. The sample consists of 139 respondents who live with their spouse and family in Malaysia. Majority of the respondents consist of 103 (74.1%) men and only 36 (25.9%) women. The age of respondents that shows higher responses was between 31- 40 years old with 47 (33.8%). A large proportion of the sample came from United Kingdom (17.3%) and India (12.9%). Moreover, of the sample, only one respondent was divorced (0.7%) and 138 were married (99.3%). On the average, respondents have a Master's degree (40.3%) and Bachelor's degree (38.8%) for their education level, thus led to higher percentage of professional positions in this study (38.8%). Of the sample, 36.0% worked with company between two and five years and their length of assignment in Malaysia was between two and five years (54.75%). Meanwhile, based on the result, respondents who have previous experiences between two and four years shows the highest score with 39.6%.

### **Hypotheses Testing**

Bivariate correlation analysis was conducted to answer the hypotheses 1 (a), (b) and (c). The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Pearson Correlation of Variables Researched	
Pearson Correlation	Contextual Performance
General adjustment	0.322**
Work adjustment	0.484**
Interactional Adjustment	0.432**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Table 1 shows that there was a significant positive relationship exists between general adjustment and contextual performance ( $r = 0.322$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In other words, the greater general adjustment faced by expatriate, the greater or higher contextual performance is shown by expatriates. Thus, hypothesis H1 (a) was supported. The output also confirmed that there was a significant positive relationship exists between work adjustment and task performance ( $r = 0.484$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, the greater work adjustment faced by expatriate, the greater contextual performance is shown by expatriates. Thus, hypothesis H1 (b) was supported. Besides, the output also confirmed that there was a significant positive relationship exists between interactional adjustment and contextual performance ( $r = 0.432$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, hypothesis H1(c) was also supported.

The hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted in this study to test the moderating effect of host country co-workers' citizenship behavior on the relationship between expatriate adjustment and contextual performance. The result can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Testing Moderation Effect using Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Standardized Beta Coefficient	Standardized Beta Coefficient
<b>Adjustment Dimensions (Standardized)</b>			
General Adjustment	-0.013	-0.025	-0.052
Interaction Adjustment	0.269**	0.264**	0.910*
Work Adjustment	0.368**	0.350**	0.246
<b>Moderator Variable (Standardized)</b>			
Host Country Co-Workers Citizenship Behaviour		0.061	0.594
<b>Interaction Terms (Standardized)</b>			
GA x HCCB			0.079
IA x HCCB			-1.087*
WA x HCCB			0.169
R	0.538	0.541	0.561
R <sup>2</sup>	0.290	0.293	0.314
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.274	0.277	0.278
R <sup>2</sup> Change	0.290	0.003	0.022
F Change	18.360	0.542	1.373
Significance F Change	0.000**	0.463	0.254

In Model 1, general, interaction and work adjustment were added in the regression analysis. The moderator variable, host country co-workers' behavior was next entered into the model, giving Model 2. Then, in next model, which is known as Model 3, the interaction terms of all expatriates' adjustment dimensions and a moderator were entered. The results were summarized in Table 2. According to Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010), if the interaction term is significant and there is a significant increase in total variance explained, or R square, as indicated by the F statistics ( $p < 0.05$ ), then, there is an interaction effect. The result shows that host country co-workers' citizenship behaviour (HCCB) is a full moderator for the relationship between interactional adjustment (IA) and contextual performance (CP) because the interaction term of IA and HCCB was statistically significant at 0.05 level. Thus, hypothesis 2(c) was supported. While, hypothesis 2(a) and 2(b) were not supported.

In producing a graph of moderating effect, the median values for interactional adjustment and host country co-workers' citizenship behaviour were 3.75 and 3.5, respectively. The recoding process based on the median values of both variables was conducted. For interactional adjustment, the median value of 1 was set as lowest through 3.75 and value of 2 was set as 3.75 through highest. In the variable view of SPSS, in the values column, 1 represents a low level, and 2 represents a high level. The same process was conducted for contextual performance with median value of 3.5. As can be seen in Figure 2, the graph of moderating effect has been illustrated.

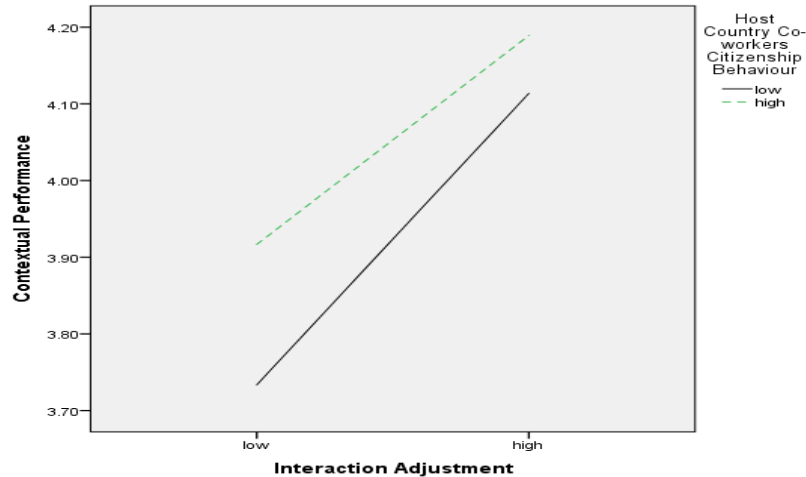


Figure 2: *Moderating Effect of Host Country Co-Workers Citizenship Behaviour on the Relationship between Interaction Adjustment and Contextual Performance*

When host country co-workers' citizenship behavior was high, there was a positive relationship between interaction adjustment and contextual performance. In other words, if host country co-workers' citizenship behaviour was low, therefore contextual performance and interactional adjustment were also low. Generally, at the early phase of interaction adjustment, expatriates need assistance and co-operation from their co-workers in order for them to enhance their contextual performance. In other words, if expatriates received high assistance at the early phase of interaction adjustment, expatriates' contextual performance would also be high if compared with expatriates who received low assistance at early phase of interaction adjustment. As proven in graph, when HCCB was low, the interaction adjustment and contextual performance were also low. Thus, it shows a positive relationship between the variables researched. For the ideal situation, when co-workers effectively communicate and assist expatriates, it could lead high level of contextual performance and adjustment of expatriates. Thus, to ensure expatriates perform better in their job, co-workers need to help them to interact and adapt with new environment and culture in the host country. Therefore, it could facilitate adjustment among expatriates and enhance their contextual performance in the organization.

### CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The results confirmed that general, work and interactional adjustments were positively related to contextual performance as shown in Table 1. Overall, the present study did support previous research that cross-cultural adjustment was a significant predictor of job performance, as a fundamental underlying factor predicting expatriate success (Lu, 2012). The extension of the research framework of host country co-workers' citizenship behavior may provide significant contributions to organizations, scholars, and academicians by offering them valuable directions in terms of expatriates' selection and training. The findings indicate that host country co-workers' citizenship behavior had significant contributions to expatriate adjustment and contextual performance. Previous studies indicate that contextual performance concerns on establishing relationship and interaction with host country co-workers (Kraimer & Wayne, 2004). However, those relationships require assistance and helping behavior from co-workers. Thus, this study proved that host country co-workers' behavior moderates the relationship between interaction adjustment and contextual performance of expatriates. A study by Toh and Denisi (2007) examined how host country nationals can play a role in expatriate adjustment and they proposed few practical ways to increase the likelihood of expatriate success. In other words, their study support the importance of considering the attitude and behavior of host country nationals as it can influence the success of expatriate. Therefore, these findings would suggest to organization to carefully consider the role and impact of host country co-workers' behaviour towards expatriate adjustment and performance for their selection and expatriation practices.

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